Marketing Practices of Women Entrepreneurs: A Study of Micro and Small Enterprises in Dakshina Kannada District

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Abstract

This study explores the marketing practices of women entrepreneurs in micro and small enterprises (MSEs) within Dakshina Kannada District. The research focuses on understanding how Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) and Market Orientation (MO) influence Competitive Advantage (CA), Networking (NW), and Marketing Performance (MP). Additionally, the study examines how demographic factors such as education, marital status, experience, and age moderate these relationships. This study used quantitative research. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire from 420 women entrepreneurs across five taluks in the Dakshina Kannada District. The survey focused on the EO, MO, CA, NW, and MP dimensions. Structural equation Modeling (SEM) and Partial Least Squares (PLS) were used for data analysis to test the hypotheses and explore the mediation and moderation effects. The results indicated that MO significantly enhanced CA ($\beta = 0.701$, $p < 0.001$), which subsequently improved NW ($\beta = 0.526$, $p < 0.001$). Effective networking positively affected MP ($\beta = 0.650$, $p < 0.001$). However, EO did not have a direct positive impact on CA ($\beta = -0.075$, $p = 0.229$). Mediation analysis revealed that CA and NW mediated the relationship between MO and MP ($t = 6.599$, $p < 0.001$), but not between EO and MP. Education and marital status were significant moderators in the relationships among EO, MO, CA, and NW, highlighting the role of these demographic factors in strategic orientation and performance outcomes. The study is geographically limited to Dakshina Kannada District and may not be generalizable to other regions. The cross-sectional design limits the ability to infer causality. Future studies should adopt a longitudinal approach to explore these dynamics in diverse geographical and cultural contexts. The findings provide actionable insights for women entrepreneurs in MSEs to effectively leverage EO and MO for competitive advantage. Emphasizing education and marital support can enhance strategic practice and performance. Networking remains a critical element of marketing success, suggesting that entrepreneurs should invest in building robust

professional networks. This study contributes to the literature on entrepreneurial marketing by integrating EO and MO with CA, NW, and MP in the context of women-led MSEs. It provides a comprehensive model that highlights the strategic interplay between these constructs and the moderating role of the demographic factors.

Keywords: Women Entrepreneurs, Micro and Small Enterprises, Entrepreneurial Orientation, Market Orientation, Competitive Advantage, Networking, Marketing Performance, Dakshina Kannada District.

Introduction

The entrepreneurial journey begins with a single step: a step taken to create, innovate, and lead. This journey, rooted in the etymology of "entrepreneur" derived from the French word "entreprendre," meaning "to undertake," encapsulates the essence of entrepreneurship as a dynamic and transformative force (Bird, B., & Jelinek, M. 1989). It is a force characterized by the relentless pursuit of opportunity, the willingness to embark on new ventures, and the capacity to innovate while navigating the inherent risks of business creation. (Reynolds, 2005) further elaborates on this concept, illustrating entrepreneurship as not only the identification of new opportunities, but also as a catalyst for launching new ventures that contribute significantly to economic development and societal progress.

In recognizing the pivotal role of entrepreneurship in fostering economic growth, the Indian government has launched several initiatives aimed at nurturing innovation and entrepreneurial spirit. Among these, the "Make in India" campaign stands out as a flagship effort to transform India into a global manufacturing hub, identifying 25 potential sectors for investment and growth. Parallel to this, the "Digital India" initiative seeks to revolutionize the country's digital infrastructure, ensuring that the benefits of technology reach every corner of the nation, thereby facilitating a knowledge-based economy. Furthermore, Start-Up India" and "Skill India" programs were designed to create a robust ecosystem that supports startups and skill development, respectively. These initiatives collectively represent a concerted effort by the government to empower entrepreneurs and equip them with the necessary tools and resources to succeed in the competitive global marketplace.

Thus, the contribution of entrepreneurs to economic development cannot be overstated. Through business creation, entrepreneurs not only generate wealth but also create jobs, thereby driving economic growth and enhancing societal welfare. The mobilization of public savings, as entrepreneurs raise funds from customers, creditors, and investors, plays a crucial role in the expansion of successful enterprises. This mobilization contributes to the creation and distribution of wealth, underscoring the entrepreneurial impact on the economy's overall health. Furthermore, by establishing businesses in less-developed areas, entrepreneurs facilitate balanced regional growth, leading to improvements in infrastructure and the availability of public and commercial services. The significance of the MSME sector in India, comprising 36 million units and employing over 80 million individuals, further highlights its entrepreneurial impact, contributing over 37% to the nation's GDP.

Women entrepreneurs in particular represent a vital segment of the entrepreneurial landscape, especially in developing countries. They are not only primary sources of income generation through self-employment but are also key drivers of employment opportunities for others. The dual factors of necessity and zeal, including self-sufficiency, confidence, and family support, propel women into entrepreneurship, challenging the traditional barriers they face in a male-dominated business world (Sharma, 2013). Despite their success, women entrepreneurs often encounter obstacles such as limited access to financial resources, marketing challenges, and the struggle to achieve a work-life balance. These challenges highlight the need for targeted support and strategies to enable women entrepreneurs to realize their full potential.

Financial institutions in India play a pivotal role in addressing women entrepreneurs' unique needs by offering funding solutions and consulting services. These institutions, including national development banks such as NSIC and SIDBI, specialized financial institutions such as NABARD, and various regional- and state-level institutions, provide a comprehensive support system aimed at fostering women's entrepreneurship. Despite these efforts, women entrepreneurs continue to face significant barriers such as financial constraints, limited technology know-how, marketing-related challenges, and difficulties in sourcing raw materials at competitive prices. These challenges underscore the importance of developing innovative strategies and policies to support

women entrepreneurs, particularly those leading micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).

The MSME sector, recognized as a critical engine of growth for the Indian economy, presents both opportunities and challenges for women entrepreneurs. MSMEs are characterized by their diverse and expansive nature, offering a wide range of products and services, and operating at various scales. Despite their significant contributions to employment, GDP, and exports, MSMEs face obstacles that hinder their sustainable growth, such as limited market reach, competition, and operational challenges. These issues are particularly pronounced for women-led MSMEs, which often start as micro or small enterprises due to lower initial capital requirements but struggle to scale and sustain their operations over time.

Given the complex landscape of entrepreneurship in India, particularly for women entrepreneurs in the MSME sector, this study aims to explore the marketing practices of women entrepreneurs in Dakshina Kannada District. By examining the implications of Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) and Marketing Orientation (MO) on Competitive Advantage (CA), networking (NW), and Marketing Performance (MP), this study seeks to derive key marketing strategies to address the changing market demands of women-led MSMEs. Furthermore, this study aimed to develop an integrated model of entrepreneurial marketing practices tailored to the needs and challenges of this segment, ultimately contributing to the long-term sustainability of women-led micro- and small-scale businesses in the region.

This introduction sets the stage for an in-depth exploration of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in the Dakshina Kannada District, focusing on the unique experiences, challenges, and strategies of women entrepreneurs. Through this investigation, this study aims to contribute valuable insights and recommendations that can support the growth and success of women-led MSMEs, thereby enhancing their contribution to India's economic development and societal progress.

Research Objectives

1. To examine research propositions on the implications of Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) and Marketing Orientation (MO) in improving women

entrepreneurs' Competitive Advantage (CA), networking (NW), and Marketing Performance (MP) in micro- and small-scale businesses.

2. To derive key marketing strategies to meet the changing market demand in micro- and small-scale sectors.
3. To establish a conceptual framework for the long-term sustainability of women-led micro- and small-scale businesses.
4. To develop an integrated model of entrepreneurial marketing practices for micro- and small-scale enterprises managed by female entrepreneurs in the Dakshina Kannada District.

Research Questions

1. Are female entrepreneurs in micro- and small-scale sectors influenced by socioeconomic factors?
2. How do socioeconomic factors affect the implementation of EO, MO, CA, and NW among female entrepreneurs?
3. How do EO, MO, CA, and NW practices contribute to women-led micro- and small-scale enterprises' performance?
4. How diverse are the marketing practices of micro and small-scale enterprises in their operations?
5. What are the roles of marketing and entrepreneurial orientation in the micro- and small-scale sectors?
6. Are Networking, Marketing Performance, and Competitive Advantage interconnected, and do they influence each other in micro- and small-scale sectors?
7. What is the impact of Entrepreneurial Marketing Practices of Women Entrepreneurs in Micro and Small Enterprises?

Review of Literature

Theoretical Foundations

The conceptual model linking Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO), Market Orientation (MO), Competitive Advantage (CA), Networking (NW), and Marketing Performance (MP) is grounded in several well-established theoretical frameworks. The Resource-

Based View (RBV) and dynamic capabilities theories provide robust theoretical foundations. These theories collectively provide a robust foundation for understanding the complex interplay of these variables and their impact on the performance of micro and small enterprises, particularly those led by women entrepreneurs in Dakshina Kannada District.

Resource-Based View (RBV)

The Resource-Based View (RBV) posits that a firm's competitive advantage is derived from its unique resources and capabilities, which are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (Barney, 1991). This theory explains how both Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) and Market Orientation (MO) contribute to Competitive Advantage (CA).

EO, characterized by innovation, proactiveness, and risk taking, can be seen as a strategic resource within the RBV framework. Firms with high EO leverage these traits to exploit new opportunities, thereby creating and sustaining a competitive edge in the market (Covin & Slevin, 1991). This competitive edge is essential for firms to differentiate themselves and outperform competitors. The MO involves the collection and dissemination of market intelligence and responsiveness to market needs. As per the RBV, these capabilities are critical resources that enable firms to align their offerings with customer demands, thus enhancing their competitive positioning. A firm that excels in understanding and responding to its market can build a robust competitive advantage (Narver & Slater, 1990).

Dynamic Capabilities Theory

Dynamic Capabilities Theory extends the RBV by emphasizing a firm's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competences to address rapidly changing environments (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997). This theory is pivotal for understanding the role of Competitive Advantage (CA) and networking (NW) in driving Marketing Performance (MP).

Under the lens of the Dynamic Capabilities Theory, CA serves as a dynamic capability that helps firms leverage their unique resources and adapt to market changes.

Adaptability is crucial for the development and maintenance of effective networks. Firms with strong competitive advantage are better equipped to build and utilize networks to access critical resources and information, which further enhances their market position (Teece et al., 1997). Networking is a dynamic capability that enables firms to tap external resources and opportunities. Effective networks provide access to valuable information and partnerships, which can significantly improve a firm's marketing performance. This aligns with the dynamic capabilities perspective, which underscores the importance of reconfiguring resources and competences to achieve and sustain competitive advantage and superior performance (Gulati, Nohria, & Zaheer, 2000).

Integration of Theories

Combining the RBV and Dynamic Capabilities Theory offers a comprehensive view of how firms can leverage their entrepreneurial and market orientations to build competitive advantages, which in turn facilitates effective networking and superior marketing performance. This integrated approach is particularly relevant for understanding the strategic behaviors of women entrepreneurs in micro and small enterprises within Dakshina Kannada District.

Introduction to Entrepreneurial Marketing (EM)

Entrepreneurial Marketing (EM) represents a critical intersection between marketing and entrepreneurship tailored to the unique needs of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). This field has emerged from the recognition that traditional marketing frameworks often do not suit the dynamic, resource-constrained environments in which entrepreneurs operate(Stokes, 2000; Morris et al., 2002). The Danish government's efforts in the 1980s to bolster SME growth through networking initiatives underscore its longstanding commitment to integrating marketing and entrepreneurial strategies (Chaston et al., 1999).

Definition and Evolution of EM

EM has defined by (Morris et al., 2002) define EM as an innovative, opportunity-driven approach to marketing that includes risk management, resource leveraging, and value creation. This definition underscores the entrepreneur's active role in steering marketing activities, often through personal networks and informal strategies (Zontanos & Anderson, 2004; Hills & Hultman, 2013). The evolution of EM as a field has been marked by key milestones, including the first American Marketing Association symposium on the topic in 1987 and subsequent research that solidified EM's theoretical foundations (Hills, 1984).

Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO)

EO concerns strategic orientation that embodies innovation, proactiveness, and risk-taking, which are crucial for achieving competitive advantage and superior performance (Covin & Slevin, 1991; Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). Studies have linked EO to the effective deployment of marketing strategies in SMEs, highlighting the importance of innovation and proactive market engagement (Eggers et al., 2012; Boso et al., 2013).

Marketing Orientation (MO)

MO is characterized by a firm-wide culture focused on creating superior value for customers, encompassing behaviors such as customer orientation, competitor orientation, and interfunctional coordination (Narver and Slater, 1990; Jaworski, 1990). Research in this area has explored the informal and intuitive application of MO in the context of SMEs and its impact on business performance (Blankson & Omar, 2002).

Competitive Advantage

In the context of EM and EO, competitive Advantage (CA) involves leveraging unique resources, knowledge, and capabilities to outperform competitors (Porter, 1980; Arditi et al., 2008). Recent studies have examined the mediating role of CA between MO, EO, and networking in enhancing firm performance, emphasizing the need for SMEs to continually innovate and adapt to market changes (Zhou et al., 2009; Sigalas & Pekka Economou, 2013;).

Networking

The significance of networking in the entrepreneurial landscape cannot be overstated, with historical and contemporary efforts highlighting its role in SME development (Nohria, 1992; Chaston, 1999). Effective networking facilitates access to critical resources, information, and markets, serving as a vital component of both the MO and EO strategies (Stokes & Stokes, 2000).

Marketing Performance

Marketing Performance in the entrepreneurial context is influenced by the integration of EM, EO, and MO practices, directly impacting the long-term success of SMEs (Frederick E. Webster, 1992; Morris et al., 2002). Challenges, such as competition, brand recognition, and market knowledge, are addressed through strategic marketing practices that enhance a firm's ability to innovate and meet customer needs (Dhameria et al., 2021a; Dhameria et al., 2021b).

Research Gap

Despite extensive research, gaps remain in the understanding of the nuanced application of EM practices, particularly among women entrepreneurs in MSMEs. Studies have predominantly focused on developed countries, leaving a critical need for research in developing contexts, such as Dakshina Kannada District in India (Toghraee et al., 2017; Yadav & Bansal, 2020). Additionally, the role of networking and competitive advantage as mediators in the relationship between MO, EO, and firm performance in women-led MSMEs warrants further exploration (Adam et al., 2009).

This review highlights the integral roles of EM, EO, MO, networking, and competitive advantage in shaping the marketing practices of women entrepreneurs in MSMEs. There is a clear indication of the dynamic interplay between these concepts, emphasizing the need for innovative opportunity-driven approaches tailored to the entrepreneurial context. The identified research gaps underscore the potential for future studies to deepen our understanding of EM practices among women entrepreneurs, particularly in the unique socio-economic environment of the Dakshina Kannada District in India.

Hypothesis Development

Implications of Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) on Competitive Advantage (CA)

The concept of Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) embodies a firm's strategic posture that encompasses innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking behavior (Miller D, 1983). EO is posited to significantly enhance a firm's competitive advantage by fostering a culture that can quickly exploit opportunities and adapt to changing market conditions (Wiklund & Shepherd, 2005). In the context of women entrepreneurs in Dakshina Kannada District, EO could manifest through innovative marketing practices, proactive adaptation to consumer trends, and willingness to undertake risks associated with new market entry or product development.

H1: Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) has a positive impact on women entrepreneurs' Competitive Advantage (CA) of women entrepreneurs in micro and small enterprises.

Implications of Market Orientation (MO) on Competitive Advantage (CA)

Market Orientation (MO) refers to the organizational culture that most effectively and efficiently creates the necessary behaviors for the creation of superior value for buyers and, thus, continuous superior performance for the business (Narver & Slater, 1990). MO involves a thorough understanding of customer needs and the competitive landscape, which in turn informs strategic decisions that can lead to a sustainable competitive advantage. For women entrepreneurs in micro and small enterprises, adopting a strong MO can translate into tailored marketing strategies that resonate with the target market's unique preferences and challenges, thereby enhancing their competitive stance.

H2: Market Orientation (MO) positively influences the Competitive Advantage (CA) of women entrepreneurs in micro and small enterprises.

Implication of Competitive Advantage (CA) on Networking (NW)

Competitive Advantage (CA) can significantly influence networking (NW) capabilities. A firm's competitive stance can facilitate the formation of strategic alliances, partnerships, and networks that provide access to vital resources, information, and markets (Gulati, Nohria, & Zaheer, 2000). In the case of women entrepreneurs in

the Dakshina Kannada District, those who have established a CA through unique marketing practices or market positioning may find it easier to attract and establish beneficial networks that can further bolster their market position and access to critical resources.

H3: Competitive Advantage (CA) has a positive impact on Networking (NW) among women entrepreneurs in micro and small enterprises.

Implications of Networking (NW) on Marketing Performance (MP)

Networking (NW) plays a critical role in enhancing Marketing Performance (MP). Through effective networking, firms can gain access to new ideas, technologies, and marketing channels, which can significantly improve their market reach and customer engagement strategies (Stam & Elfring, 2008). For women entrepreneurs, leveraging networks could mean better access to market information, sharing of best practices, and collaboration in marketing initiatives, all of which can lead to improved marketing performance.

H4: Networking (NW) positively influences Marketing Performance (MP) among women entrepreneurs in micro and small enterprises.

Mediation effects of Competitive Advantage (CA) and Networking (NW) between EO/MO and MP

The relationship between EO/MO and MP is complex, and can be mediated by both CA and NW. A firm's EO and MO contribute to its CA, which enhances its networking capabilities. These enhanced networks can provide the resources, information, and support required to improve marketing performance. Similarly, the direct impact of EO and MO on marketing performance can be amplified through the effective use of competitive advantage and networking to access broader markets and implement more effective marketing strategies.

H5: Competitive Advantage (CA) and Networking (NW) mediate the relationship between Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) and Marketing Performance (MP).

H6: Competitive Advantage (CA) and networking (NW) mediate the relationship between Market Orientation (MO) and Marketing Performance (MP).

Moderation effects of Entrepreneurial orientation (EA), Market Orientation (MO), Competitive Advantage (CA), Networking (NW) and Marketing Performance (MP) between Education, Martial Status, Experience, Age

Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) is a strategic Orientation that reflects a firm's propensity to innovate, take risks, and proactively pursue new opportunities (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). EO is critical for enhancing Competitive Advantage (CA), defined as the attributes that allow a firm to outperform its competitors (Sigalas & Pekka Economou, 2013). Education plays a pivotal role in shaping entrepreneurial capabilities and in enhancing competitive strategies. Studies suggest that individuals with higher education levels are better equipped to leverage EO to gain a competitive edge (Sharma, 2013). Education enhances analytical and strategic thinking, which can amplify's the impact on CA (Anderson et al., 2014). Marital status influences how entrepreneurs manage their businesses and balances their personal and professional responsibilities. Married entrepreneurs might benefit from a stability and support system that allows them to take calculated risks and pursue innovative strategies, thereby enhancing their competitive position (Knight, 2016). In this context, EO can be a powerful driver of CA, moderated by personal dynamics associated with marital status (Mahmood & Hanafi, 2013). Business experience provides a practical understanding of market dynamics and strategic maneuvers (Boso et al., 2013). Experienced entrepreneurs can better apply EO to create and sustain a competitive advantage (Eggers et al., 2012). Their accumulated knowledge and skills allow them to effectively navigate complex business environments. Age can influence risk-taking and innovative behavior associated with EO. Younger entrepreneurs may be more inclined to embrace EO because of their openness to new ideas and fewer responsibilities (Covin & Slevin, 1991). Conversely, older entrepreneurs may leverage their extensive experience and networks to gain competitive advantage through strategic EO applications (Miller, 2011).

Market Orientation (MO) refers to a business's focus on understanding and responding to customer needs and market conditions (Narver & Slater, 1990). MO is essential for creating a sustainable competitive advantage by aligning business operations with

market demand (Cadogan et al., 2002). Education equips entrepreneurs with the skills to effectively interpret and respond to market signals effectively (Yadav & Bansal, 2020). Educated entrepreneurs can leverage MO to better understand market trends and consumer behavior, thereby enhancing their competitive edge (Narver & Slater, 1990). Marital status can moderate the relationship between MO and CA by influencing an entrepreneur's ability to engage in market research and customer interaction. Married entrepreneurs may have more stable personal lives, allowing them to focus on market-oriented strategies (Ahmad et al., 2021). Experienced entrepreneurs are adept at interpreting market data and applying it to strategic decisions (Boso et al., 2013). Their deep understanding of market dynamics enables them to effectively use MO to maintain and enhance their competitive advantage (Blankson & Omar, 2002). Age can affect how entrepreneurs perceive and act on the market information. Younger entrepreneurs may be more attuned to emerging market trends, whereas older entrepreneurs may rely on established customer bases and networks to drive market-oriented strategies (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993).

Competitive Advantage (CA) and networking (NW) are crucial to business success. NW involves building and leveraging relationships with other businesses, customers, and stakeholders (Gulati et al., 2000). NW can enhance CA by providing access to resources, information, and opportunities (Stam & Elfring, 2008). Education enhances an entrepreneur's ability to build and sustain networks that contribute to a competitive advantage (Gulati et al., 2000). Educated entrepreneurs are often more adept at forming strategic alliances and leveraging these relationships to enhance their market positions (Anderson et al., 2014). Marital status influences how entrepreneurs engage with their networks. Married entrepreneurs may have different networking dynamics than single entrepreneurs, affecting how they leverage these networks for a competitive advantage (Knight, 2016). Experienced entrepreneurs are often better networkers as they have more opportunities to build and cultivate professional relationships (Boso et al., 2013). These networks can significantly enhance competitive advantage by providing support and facilitating business growth (Frederick E. Webster, 1992). Age can affect networking capabilities and the ability to translate these networks into a competitive advantage. Younger entrepreneurs might be more active in building new networks, whereas older entrepreneurs might have established networks that are potentially less dynamic (Stam & Elfring, 2008).

Networking (NW) is instrumental in driving Marketing Performance (MP) by facilitating access to markets, resources, and customer bases (Gulati et al., 2000). Effective networking can enhance an entrepreneur's marketing strategies and outcomes (Dhameria et al., 2021). Education provides entrepreneurs with the skills needed to effectively utilize networks to enhance their marketing performance (Liu et al., 2020). Educated entrepreneurs are often better at leveraging their networks for marketing success (Ho et al., 2009). Marital status can influence how entrepreneurs use their networks to improve marketing performance. Married entrepreneurs may rely more on established networks and stable relationships, thus impacting their marketing approaches (Knight, 2016). Experienced entrepreneurs are likely to have extensive networks that can be leveraged to improve their marketing performance (Boso et al., 2013). Their ability to navigate and utilize these networks effectively can significantly enhance their marketing efforts (Shane & Cable, 2002). Age influences networking activities and their impact on marketing performance. Younger entrepreneurs may focus on building new networks, whereas older entrepreneurs may optimize existing networks for marketing success (Stokes, 2000).

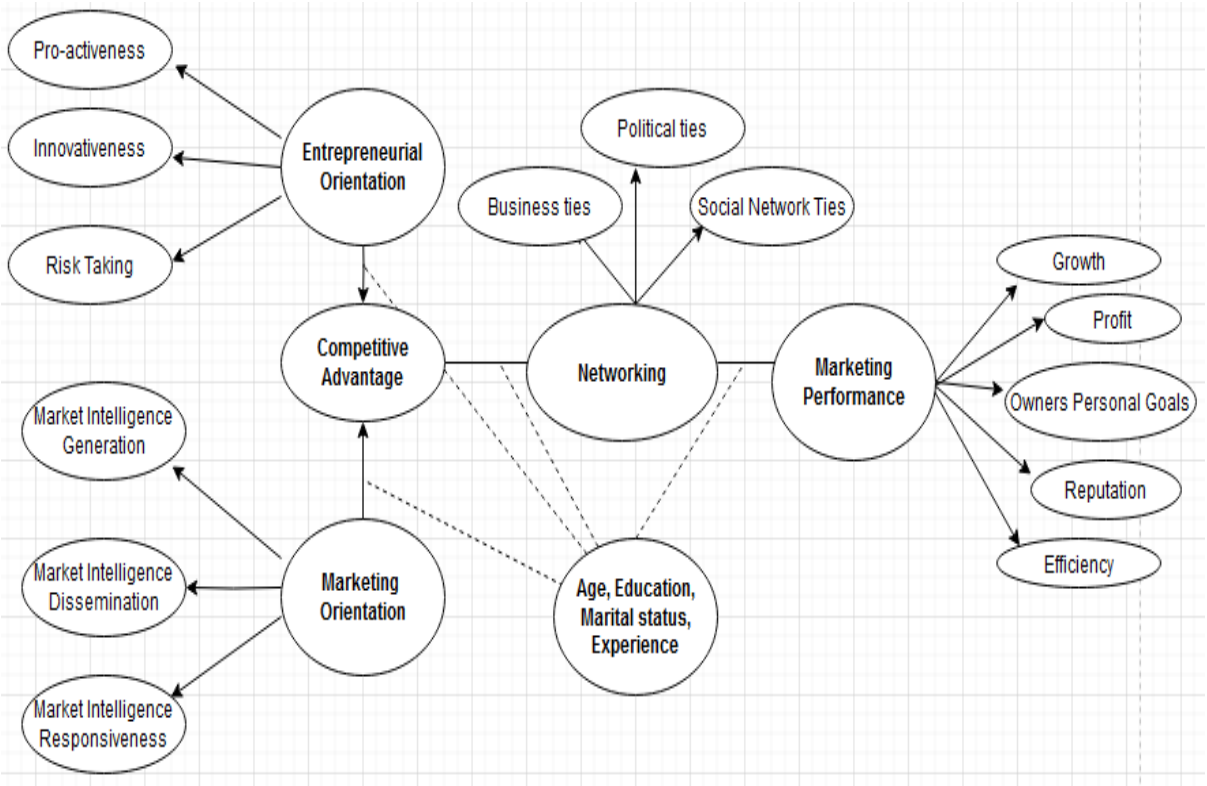
H7a: Entrepreneurial orientation and Competitive Advantage positively moderate education, marital status, experience, and age.

H7b: Market Orientation and Competitive Advantage positively moderate between Education, Martial Status, Experience, Age.

H7c: Competitive Advantage and Networking positively moderate between Education, Martial Status, Experience, Age.

H7d: Networking and Marketing Performance positively moderate between Education, Martial Status, Experience, Age.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model



Research Methodology

Measures

This study investigated five principal constructs: entrepreneurial orientation, marketing orientation, competitive advantage, networking, and marketing performance. The EO construct of entrepreneurial orientation was evaluated through three dimensions: pro-activeness (assessed with six items), risk-taking (four items), and innovativeness (four items). These dimensions were inspired by the works of Huang and Tsai (2009), Becherer and colleagues (2012), Eggers (2018), and Sadiku-Dushi et al. (2019). Marketing orientation was divided into three dimensions: market intelligence generation (evaluated through five items), market intelligence dissemination (four items), and market intelligence responsiveness (three items). These dimensions were drawn from Jaworski and Kohli (1993), Cadogan et al. (2002), and Boso Nathaniel (2013). The networking construct was measured in three dimensions: social, political,

and business network ties, each measured using three items. The items for these dimensions were found in the studies by Shane and Cable (2002) and Liu et al. (2020). Marketing performance was analyzed across five dimensions: efficiency, growth, profit consisting of three items each, the owner's personal goals measured by four items, and reputation measured by five items. These items were adapted from Huang and Tsai (2009), Becherer et al. (2012), and Sadiku-Dushi et al. (2019). Lastly, competitive advantage was assessed using a ten-items, adapted from Mahmood Rosli and Hanafi Norshafizah (2013). Each construct was measured using a multiitem scale in an offline survey. The development of the survey instrument underwent a thorough preparation phase, including a comprehensive literature review, expert feedback on survey items, and pilot testing with 25 small women micro-entrepreneurs, followed by an analysis to refine the survey. The collected data were then analyzed using structural equation modeling to understand the relationships and impacts among the constructs.

Table 1: Measurement Scale Item

Sl.No	Measurement Items	References
1	**Entrepreneurial orientation**	
	Pro-activeness	Becherer etall,2012, Li Huang and Tsai 2009 and sadiku-Dushi et al 2019
i	I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my company.	
ii	I am always looking for better ways to do things in my company.	
iii	I excel at identifying opportunities for my company.	
iv	I am great at turning problems at my company into opportunities.	
v	When it comes to my company, I am more action oriented than reaction oriented.	
vi	Nothing is more exciting in my company than seeing my ideas turn into reality	
	Innovativeness	Becherer etall,2012, Li Huang and Tsai 2009 and sadiku-Dushi et al 2019
vii	My company tries to use innovative approaches if it will help them get the job done more efficiently.	
viii	Being innovative is a competitive advantage for my company.	
ix	My company tends to be more innovative that most of my competitors.	
x	I create an atmosphere that encourages creativity and innovativeness.	

	Risk taking	Eggers 2018
xi	We value new strategies/plans even if we are not certain they will always work.	
xii	To make effective changes to our offering, we are willing to accept at least a moderate level of risk of significant losses.	
xiii	We encourage people in our company to take risks with new ideas.	
xiv	We engage in risky investments (e.g. new employees, facilities, debt, stock options) to stimulate future growth.	
2	**Market Orientation**	
	Market Intelligence Generation	Cadogan et al., 2002; Jaworski and Kohli, 1993 and Boso Nathaniel, 2013
xv	We generate a lot of information concerning trends (e.g., regulations, technological developments, political, and economic) in our target market markets.	
xvi	We are fast to detect fundamental shifts in our target market environment (e.g., regulation, technology, and economy).	
xvii	We periodically review the likely effect of changes in our target market environment (e.g., regulations, and technology).	
xviii	We are slow to detect changes in our customers' product preferences.	
xix	We collect industry information through informal means (e.g., lunch with industry friends, talks with trade partners).	
	Market intelligence dissemination	Cadogan et al., 2002; Jaworski and Kohli, 1993
xx	Information that can influence the way we serve our customers takes forever to reach relevant personnel	
xxi	Important information about our customers is often 'lost in the system'.	
xxii	Information about our competitors' activities often reaches relevant personnel too late to be of any use.	
xxiii	Important information concerning target market trends (e.g. regulation, and technology) is often discarded as it makes its way along the communication chain	
	Market intelligence responsiveness	Cadogan et al., 2002; Jaworski and Kohli, 1993
xxiv	We are quick to respond to important changes in our business environment (e.g., regulation, and technology).	
xxv	We are quick to respond to significant changes in our competitors' price structures in target markets.	

xxvi	We rapidly respond to competitive actions that threaten us in our target markets	
3	**Competitive Advantage**	Mahmood Rosli and Hanafi Norshafizah 2013
xxvii	Our products/services are difficult for competitors to copy	
xxviii	Our response to competitive moves in the marketplace is good	
xxvix	Our ability to track changes in customer needs and wants is good	
xxx	We are quick to response to customer complaints	
xxxi	Our collection of strategic information about customers and competitors for use with strategic planning is good	
xxxii	Our speed of disseminating information in-house about competitors is good	
xxxiii	Our analysis of customer satisfactions with the products is good	
xxxiv	We make effort for product changes to overcome customer dissatisfaction with existing products	
xxxv	Our products/services have a significant advantage over those of our competitors	
xxxvi	We are quick to response in meeting changes to customer needs and wants	
4	**Networking**	
	Social network ties	Shane and Cable, 2002
xxxvii	I can obtain information about my industry from my network of contacts faster than competitors can obtain the same information.	
xxxviii	I have a professional relationship with someone influential in my industry.	
xxxix	I have engaged with someone influential in my industry in informal social activity (e.g., playing tennis).	
	Political ties	Liu et al., 2020
xl	We spend much effort to cultivate personal connections with government officials	
xli	We maintain good relationships with officials of state banks and other governmental agencies	
xlii	We devote substantial resources to maintain good relationships with officials of administrative agencies	
	Business ties	Liu et al., 2020
xliii	Personal relationships with our suppliers are important to the firm	
xliv	We have invested in relationships with the managers of our suppliers	
xlv	We place great emphasis on understanding the needs of our suppliers, competitors and buyers	

5	**Marketing Performance**	
	Efficiency	Becherer et. al,2012, Li Huang and Tsai 2009 and sadiku-Dushi et al 2019
xlvi	My firm is usually satisfied with return on investment	
xlvii	My firm is usually satisfied with return on equity	
xlviii	My firm is usually satisfied with return on assets	
	Growth	Becherer et. al,2012, Li Huang and Tsai 2009 and sadiku-Dushi et al 2019
xlix	My firm is usually satisfied with sale growth	
l	My firm is usually satisfied with market share growth	
li	My firm is usually satisfied with employee growth	
	Profit	Becherer et. al,2012, Li Huang and Tsai 2009 and sadiku-Dushi et al 2019
lii	My firm is usually satisfied with return on sales	
liii	My firm is usually satisfied with net profit margins	
liv	My firm is usually satisfied with gross profit margins	
	Owners' personal goals	Becherer et. al,2012, Li Huang and Tsai 2009 and sadiku-Dushi et al 2019
lv	I'm satisfied with my personal financial situation	
lvi	My status in society is improved	
lvii	My standard of living is improved	
lviii	I have achieved all my startup goals	
	Reputation	Becherer et. al,2012, Li Huang and Tsai 2009 and sadiku-Dushi et al 2019
lix	My company has high reputation	
lx	My company treats its customer very seriously	
lxi	My company is followed by a large number of followers on social media	
lxii	My employees are proud to be the part of this company I consider my company philanthropic	

Questionnaire design

The questionnaire utilized a 7-point Likert scale, with options ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The scale items were inspired by and modified from earlier studies that defined the variables for operationalizing the constructs under investigation. Table 1 summarizes the scale items, including the origin of each item. Following the guidance of Diamantopoulos and Winklhofer (2001), efforts were made

to ensure that the questionnaire was clear, unambiguous, and free of specialized terminology. The preliminary version of the questionnaire was validated to confirm the phrasing of the questions and suitability of the response options. Subsequently, the questionnaire was subjected to a pre-test to evaluate its readability and relevance directly with experts in entrepreneurial research from academic institutions hosting social entrepreneurship centers. Based on the feedback received, modifications were made to improve the instrument. The refined questionnaire was then pilot-tested in Dakshina Kannada District, Karnataka, India. For this final pilot test, 25 women entrepreneurs associated with the district industry center (DIC) were interviewed in person. These meetings were facilitated by participation in the Small Enterprise Fair in Mangalore. The pilot test was conducted methodically, beginning with an explanation of the research objective and scope. The participants were then invited to complete the questionnaire, with an average completion time of approximately 25 minutes. The session concluded with a debriefing that allowed for an open-ended discussion of the participants' impressions of the questionnaire. Feedback from the pilot test in Mangalore led to further refinement of the survey instrument, primarily concerning demographic questions and minor adjustments in wording to enhance clarity and respondent engagement.

Sample description

The survey sampling process was designed to target women involved in manufacturing and service sectors within the micro-small enterprise category across the Dakshina Kannada district, specifically within the five taluks of Puttur, Sullia, Belthangady, Mangalore, and Bantwal. Given that the women surveyed were independent entrepreneurs operating micro-small enterprises, the methodology facilitated personal connections between the researchers and entrepreneurs. These entrepreneurs were affiliated with the district industry center (DIC) and registered in the Udyog Aadhar portal database of the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), ensuring a focused and relevant respondent base for the study.

Our study adopted a stratified sampling technique to ensure a representative and statistically reliable cross-section of micro and small female entrepreneurs within the Dakshina Kannada district. The district's entrepreneurial population recorded was 2233, as recorded in the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises' Udyog Aadhar

portal database from 2015 to 2020, and was methodically segmented into five distinct strata corresponding to the taluks of Puttur, Sullia, Belthangady, Mangalore, and Bantwal. By partitioning the population into these strata, we aimed to mirror the demographic and geographic diversity inherent within the district, allowing an equitable representation of each subgroup in the overall sample. This approach was crucial for addressing the study's objective of comprehensively understanding the entrepreneurial landscape across different localities.

To determine the sample size for each stratum, we utilized the proportions of the population each taluk represented, aligning with the methodological guidance provided by Raosoft's (2004) Sample Size Calculator, which recommended a sample size based on a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level and a 50% response distribution, the recommended sample size was determined to be 383. A total of 460 respondents were initially approached, and 420 valid responses were ultimately analyzed post-data cleaning. The sample size was allocated across the taluks in proportion to their respective population sizes, ensuring that larger taluks were appropriately represented without overshadowing smaller ones. This proportional distribution is paramount for minimizing the sampling bias, thereby enhancing the accuracy of our findings. Statistically, this method significantly increases the efficiency of the study, reducing the variance within each subgroup, and consequently enhancing the precision of our estimates. Moreover, it provides a robust foundation for both intra- and inter-taluk analyses, facilitating a nuanced exploration of the entrepreneurial dynamics within the district.

Table 2 provides a population and Table 2.1 provides breakdown of the data collected from women entrepreneurs across both SMEs and small enterprises. In the micro-enterprise category, the manufacturing and service sectors were spreaded across taluks, with Mangalore showing the highest participation (1,155), followed by Bantwal (257), Puttur (161), Belthangady (110), and Sullia (96). For small enterprises, Mangalore again demonstrated significant activity (326), with the total contributions from all taluks amounting to 454. The grand total of women entrepreneurs registered in both micro and small enterprises reached 2233, highlighting a vibrant and diverse entrepreneurial ecosystem in the Dakshina Kannada district.

Table 2: Women entrepreneurs registered Data gathered from Udyog Aadhar portal database in the year June 2020

	Micro Enterprises		Micro Total	Small enterprises		Small Total	Grand Total
TALUQ	**Manufacturing**	**Services**		**Manufacturing**	**Services**		
Bantwal	144	113	257	13	40	53	310
Belthangady	52	58	110	6	12	18	128
Mangalore	502	653	1155	107	219	326	1481
Puttur	96	65	161	15	27	42	203
Sullia	63	33	96	3	12	15	111
Grand Total	**857**	**922**	**1779**	**144**	**310**	**454**	**2233**

Table 2.1: Sample size

TALUQ	SAMPLE SIZE
Bantwal	53
Belthangady	20
Mangalore	284
Puttur	45
Sullia	18
Total	**420**

The demographic analysis of 420 respondents revealed a diverse age distribution among entrepreneurs, with the largest group being within the 36-40 range (25.71%), followed by those in the 41-45 range (20.95%). Young entrepreneurs aged 21-25 represent 12.38%, indicating a vibrant young entrepreneurial community. The data show a minimal representation in the older age categories, with those aged 56-60 and above 61 years constituting only 1.90% and 2.86% of the population, respectively. Educational qualifications varied among the respondents, with a significant majority holding a graduate degree (48.57%), underscoring the role of higher education in entrepreneurial ventures. Postgraduates accounted for 23.81%, while basic education and matriculate levels represented a smaller fraction of the cohort. This distribution emphasizes the importance of formal education in the entrepreneurial domain.

Marital status analysis revealed that a substantial majority of entrepreneurs were married (83.81%), highlighting potentially stable personal environments conducive to business endeavors. Singles and Widows each constituted 6.67%, with Remarried and Divorce statuses being relatively rare. The entrepreneurial landscape is evenly divided in terms of family systems, with joint families making up 56.19% and nuclear families making up 43.81%, indicating diverse familial structures supporting entrepreneurial activities. Sources of business ideas predominantly came from the entrepreneurs themselves (65.71%), followed by family (20.00%), and relatives (6.67%). This finding suggests a strong inclination towards self-initiation and familial influence in the ideation phase of entrepreneurial ventures.

Notably, 80.95% of entrepreneurs receive family support to run their businesses, illustrating the critical role of familial backing in entrepreneurial success. Conversely, 19.05% of the entrepreneurs operate without this support network. Market survey conductance was relatively divided, with 42.86% affirming participation in such research, while 57.14% did not, indicating varied approaches to market analysis among entrepreneurs. Regarding the type of enterprises, Service enterprises dominate the landscape (65.71%), compared to Manufacturing enterprises (34.29%), highlighting a trend towards service-oriented business models among the respondents. The size distribution of enterprises shows a near-equal split between micro (50.48%) and small enterprises (49.52%), illustrating the prevalence of small-scale operations within the entrepreneurial community. Experience levels varied, with the majority having 1-5 years of experience (52.38%), followed by those with 6-10 years (33.33%). This demonstrates a relatively young entrepreneurial community in terms of business operations experience. Sources of finance are diverse, with bank loans (38.10%) and savings (32.38%) being the predominant means, followed by contributions from Self-employment, Family, and SHGs, reflecting a wide range of financial avenues utilized by entrepreneurs, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Respondents Profiling

Demographic Profile	**Respondents**	**Percentage**
Age		
21-25 range	52	12.38

26-30 range	24	5.71
31-35 range	68	16.19
36-40 range	108	25.71
41-45 range	88	20.95
46-50 range	44	10.48
51-55 range	16	3.81
56-60 range	8	1.90
61 above range	12	2.86
	420	
Educational Qualification		
Illiterate	0	0.00
Basic	4	0.95
Matriculate	64	15.24
Higher Secondary	40	9.52
Graduate	204	48.57
Postgraduates	100	23.81
Diploma	8	1.90
	420	
Marital Status		
Married	352	83.81
Single	28	6.67
Widow	28	6.67
Remarried	8	1.90
Divorce	4	0.95
	420	
Type of Family System		
Joint family	236	56.19
Nuclear family	184	43.81
	420	
Sources of Business Idea		
Own	276	65.71
Family	84	20.00
Relatives	28	6.67
Counsellor	20	4.76
Friend	12	2.86
	420	
Family Support to Run Business		
Yes	340	80.95
No	80	19.05
	420	
Whether Carried Out Market Survey		
Yes	180	42.86

No	240	57.14
	420	
Type of Enterprise		
Manufacturing enterprise	144	34.29
Service enterprise	276	65.71
	420	
Size of the Enterprise		
Micro enterprise	212	50.48
Small enterprises	208	49.52
	420	
Experience		
less than 1 year	0	0.00
1 -5 years	220	52.38
6-10 years	140	33.33
11-15 years	32	7.62
16-2 years	12	2.86
21-25 years	4	0.95
25-30 years	8	1.90
above 31 years	4	0.95
	420	
Source of finance		
Savings	136	32.38
Bank loan	160	38.10
Bootstrap	8	1.90
Spouse	12	2.86
Family	16	3.81
SHG	36	8.57
Self employed	52	12.38
	420	

Data analysis

The structural equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) technique, known for its variance-based structural equation modeling capabilities, aims primarily at predicting core target constructs (Hair et al., 2016). The choice of PLS-SEM was motivated by several factors: its adaptability in handling complex predictive models featuring numerous variables and interrelations (Hair et al., 2016; Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011), its efficiency in integrating both reflective and formative measurement models; and its effectiveness in establishing convergent validity for formative constructs through redundancy analysis. The reliability of the research instrument was evaluated using

Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability measures, while validity was confirmed through tests for both lower- and higher-order constructs. The analysis was conducted using the Smart PLS statistical software (Hair et al., 2011), adhering to a mandatory two-stage process for second-order hierarchical SEM analysis (Anderson et al., 2014). The initial phase involved assessing the reliability and validity of the measurement model at the lower-order construct level. The second phase focused on structural modeling at the second-order level to examine causal relationships. The findings from this comprehensive two-phase analysis are elaborated in the following sections.

Results

Measurement Model Evaluation

By utilizing SmartPLS 4 software, as recommended by Ringle, Wende, & Becker (2015), we rigorously validated the measurement model to scrutinize reflective measures. This systematic evaluation involved an initial focus on factor loadings to assess the constructs' integrity, subsequently advancing the determination of construct reliability and validity. According to the descriptive statistics and measurement model assessment delineated in Table 4, the means, predominantly situated above three but below five, imply a consensus towards the affirmative for the queried measures. Furthermore, the consistently observed standard deviations below two substantiate the mean values as representative of the collective respondent perception with limited dispersion. The analysis of descriptive statistics revealed uniform mean values of 0.000 across all constructs, indicating neutral agreement among respondents. However, the statistical depth of the data becomes apparent when considering the standard deviations, which are uniformly held at 1.000, skewness, and kurtosis. Skewness values ranged from -1.621 (Business Ties) to -0.551 (Political Ties), indicating varying degrees of asymmetry. Notably, Pro-activeness and business ties exhibited pronounced left-skewness and high leptokurtic distributions, with kurtosis of 4.016 and 3.680, respectively, suggesting outlier sensitivity. Conversely, constructs such as political and social network ties showed minimal kurtosis, hinting at flatter distributions. Median values, particularly for Owners' Personal Goals (0.462) and Profit (0.478), were above the neutral point, suggesting a positive disposition among respondents towards these constructs. This compact analysis underscores the intricate variance and distribution

patterns across constructs, highlighting the complexity of respondents' perceptions within the validated measurement model.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics

Constructs	Mean	Median	Observed min	Observed max	Standard deviation	Excess kurtosis	Skewness
Business Ties	0.000	0.395	-3.841	1.454	1.000	3.680	-1.621
Competitive Advantage	0.000	0.089	-4.260	1.794	1.000	2.179	-1.110
Efficiency	0.000	0.000	-3.423	1.702	1.000	0.468	-0.699
Growth	0.000	0.198	-3.181	1.729	1.000	0.672	-0.590
Innovativeness	0.000	0.343	-4.494	1.552	1.000	2.387	-1.217
Market Intelligence Dissemination	0.000	0.054	-2.592	1.816	1.000	0.022	-0.662
Market Intelligence Responsiveness	0.000	0.036	-3.433	1.785	1.000	1.630	-0.779
Market Intelligence Generation	0.000	0.129	-2.807	1.792	1.000	0.097	-0.595
Owners Personal Goals	0.000	0.462	-3.242	1.682	1.000	1.049	-0.945
Political Ties	0.000	0.208	-2.558	1.590	1.000	-0.302	-0.551
Pro-activeness	0.000	0.266	-4.531	1.561	1.000	4.016	-1.622
Profit	0.000	0.478	-3.030	1.647	1.000	0.889	-0.824
Reputation	0.000	0.087	-4.122	1.675	1.000	2.077	-0.943
Risk Taking	0.000	0.194	-3.489	1.717	1.000	1.043	-1.119
Social Network Ties	0.000	0.067	-2.318	1.650	1.000	-0.221	-0.656

Reliability Analysis Assessment

Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) conceptualized reliability as the degree to which an instrument consistently and stably measures a concept, underlining the criticality of repeatability in obtaining consistent results across multiple administrations. To

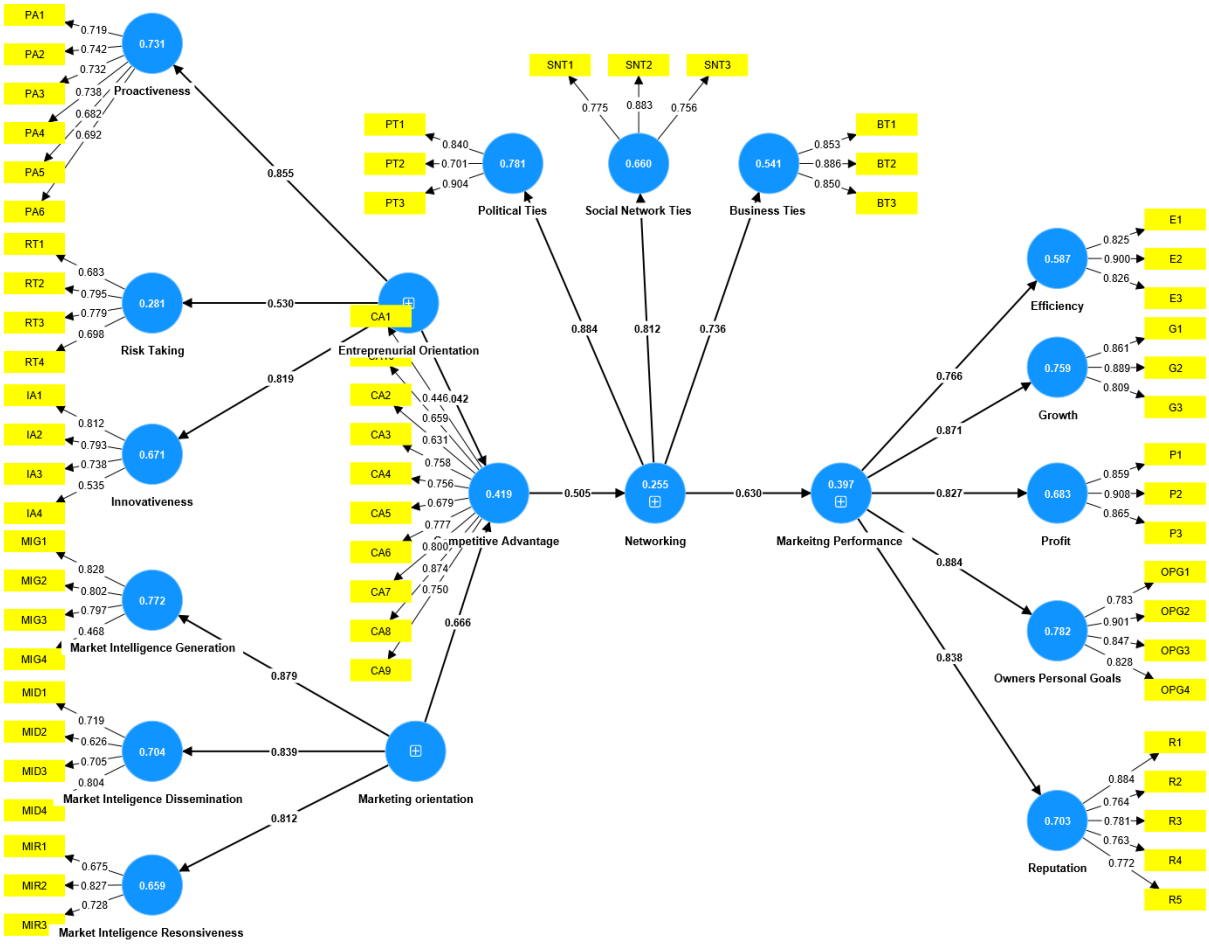
ascertain this reliability within our study, we employed two predominant methods: Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). As presented in Table 5 and Figure 2, our findings for Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.603 to 0.893, whereas the Composite Reliability scores varied between 0.789 and 0.914. These values surpass the commonly accepted minimum threshold of 0.50 for reliability metrics, as suggested by Hair et al. (2016), thereby affirming the constructs' reliability within our research framework.

Table 5: Construct Reliability Analysis

Constructs	Items	Factor Loading	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Business Ties	BT1	0.853	**0.829**	**0.898**	**0.745**
	BT2	0.886			
	BT3	0.850			
Competitive Advantage	CA1	0.446	**0.893**	**0.914**	**0.521**
	CA10	0.659			
	CA2	0.631			
	CA3	0.758			
	CA4	0.756			
	CA5	0.679			
	CA6	0.777			
	CA7	0.800			
	CA8	0.874			
	CA9	0.750			
Efficiency	E1	0.825	**0.809**	**0.887**	**0.724**
	E2	0.900			
	E3	0.826			
Growth	G1	0.861	**0.813**	**0.890**	**0.729**
	G2	0.889			
	G3	0.809			
Innovativeness	IA1	0.812	**0.701**	**0.815**	**0.530**
	IA2	0.793			
	IA3	0.738			
	IA4	0.535			
Market Intelligence Dissemination	MID1	0.719	**0.683**	**0.807**	**0.513**
	MID2	0.626			
	MID3	0.705			
	MID4	0.804			
	MIG1	0.828	**0.700**	**0.822**	**0.546**

Market Intelligence Generation	MIG2	0.802			
	MIG3	0.797			
	MIG4	0.468			
Market Intelligence Responsiveness	MIR1	0.675	**0.603**	**0.789**	**0.557**
	MIR2	0.827			
	MIR3	0.728			
Owners Personal Goals	OPG1	0.783	**0.861**	**0.906**	**0.707**
	OPG2	0.901			
	OPG3	0.847			
	OPG4	0.828			
Political Ties	P1	0.859	**0.748**	**0.859**	**0.672**
	P2	0.908			
	P3	0.865			
Pro-activeness	PA1	0.719	**0.812**	**0.864**	**0.516**
	PA2	0.742			
	PA3	0.732			
	PA4	0.738			
	PA5	0.682			
	PA6	0.692			
Profit	PT1	0.840	**0.851**	**0.909**	**0.770**
	PT2	0.701			
	PT3	0.904			
Reputation	R1	0.884	**0.852**	**0.895**	**0.631**
	R2	0.764			
	R3	0.781			
	R4	0.763			
	R5	0.772			
Risk Taking	RT1	0.683	**0.724**	**0.828**	**0.548**
	RT2	0.795			
	RT3	0.779			
	RT4	0.698			
Social Network Ties	SNT1	0.775	**0.729**	**0.847**	**0.650**
	SNT2	0.883			
	SNT3	0.756			

Figure 2: PLS Lower order Construct



Construct Validity

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity reflects the extent to which various approaches to measuring a single concept align with one another. It is predicted that measures designed to capture the same underlying concept should demonstrate a high degree of covariance, validating their effectiveness in concept measurement (Carlson & Herdman, 2012). In this study, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values range from 0.516 to 0.770, suggesting that when AVE values meet or exceed the benchmark of 0.50, they indicate a strong convergence towards the intended construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Said et al., 2011). This threshold across all constructs confirms the establishment of convergent validity within our research, as detailed by the AVE statistics presented in Table 5, thereby affirming the reliability of the construct measurements.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity assesses the extent to which measures of distinct concepts are differentiated. This is based on the premise that measures representing different concepts should not exhibit high correlations if they capture unique constructs (Carlson & Herdman, 2012).

Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio

In this analysis, the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio was utilized as a criterion for evaluating discriminant validity, with a recommended threshold of 0.90 to accommodate the conceptual overlaps among certain constructs, such as between empowerment-impact and empowerment-goal internalization (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015; Hair et al., 2016). The examination of HTMT ratios, as detailed in Table 6, alongside established criteria (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Fornell & Larcker, 1981), substantiates the achievement of discriminant validity in this study, ensuring that the measures of different constructs remain distinctly separate.

Table 6: HTMT Ratios

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
CA	0.629													
EF	0.674	0.420												
GR	0.639	0.669	0.804											
INV	0.226	0.313	0.386	0.330										
MID	0.506	0.521	0.646	0.702	0.535									
MIR	0.692	0.881	0.522	0.757	0.464	0.783								
MIG	0.607	0.738	0.650	0.675	0.531	0.865	0.866							
OPG	0.563	0.520	0.657	0.803	0.277	0.509	0.438	0.551						
PT	0.583	0.377	0.534	0.538	0.363	0.653	0.475	0.600	0.488					
PRA	0.105	0.254	0.204	0.167	0.640	0.314	0.363	0.310	0.121	0.162				
PRF	0.579	0.426	0.707	0.867	0.154	0.486	0.364	0.591	0.830	0.420	0.100			
RP	0.567	0.429	0.642	0.780	0.460	0.608	0.528	0.556	0.829	0.595	0.248	0.591		

RT	0.148	0.266	0.249	0.276	0.454	0.646	0.486	0.768	0.214	0.411	0.243	0.233	0.293	
SNT	0.395	0.463	0.564	0.530	0.488	0.592	0.520	0.679	0.375	0.885	0.246	0.447	0.522	0.487

Note: BT-Business Ties; CA- Competitive Advantage; EF-Efficiency; GR-Growth; INN-Innovativeness; MID-Market Intelligence Dissemination; MIR-Market Intelligence Responsiveness; MIG-Market Intelligence Generation; OPG- Owners' Personal Goals; PT- Political Ties.

Fornell and Larcker Criterion

The Fornell and Larcker Criterion serves as a robust method for assessing discriminant validity by comparing the square roots of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values with the correlations among constructs. This criterion stipulates that the square root of the AVE for each construct should exceed the construct's correlation with any other construct, ensuring that each construct is distinct and captures a unique variance beyond that attributable to measurement error (Alarcon & Sanchez, 2015; Zait & Bertea, 2011). Following the Fornell and Larcker Criterion, an in-depth examination of the discriminant validity was conducted.

This approach hinges on the premise that for each construct, the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) must surpass its correlations with any other construct, ensuring distinctiveness. The AVE's square root values for constructs such as Business Ties (0.863), Competitive Advantage (0.722), efficiency (0.851), and growth (0.854) not only reflect their robustness, but also their uniqueness in the conceptual framework. A detailed exploration of Table 7 illustrates the constructs' discriminant validity. For instance, Business Ties (BT), with a square root AVE of 0.863, exhibit lower correlation coefficients with all other constructs, such as Competitive Advantage (CA) at 0.540, signalling clear discriminant validity. This pattern is consistent across the board with efficiency (EF) and growth (GR), demonstrating significant distinctiveness from other constructs with high square-root AVE values and comparatively lower correlation values. Moreover, the constructs of innovativeness (INV, 0.728), Market Intelligence Dissemination (MID, 0.717), and owners' personal goals (OPG, 0.841) further affirm discriminant validity, as their AVE square roots are greater than the inter-construct correlations. Notably, even constructs with conceptual closeness such as Market Intelligence Responsiveness (MIR, 0.746)

and generation (MIG, 0.739) maintain distinctiveness and adhere to the conditions set forth by the Fornell and Larcker Criterion. The assessment revealed that all constructs, including Political Ties (PT, 0.820) and reputation (RP, 0.794), adhere to Fornell and Larcker's threshold, underscoring the successful establishment of discriminant validity. This evaluation confirms the presence of discriminant validity across the board, as each construct's uniqueness is statistically validated through higher AVE square root values compared with inter-construct correlations. Consequently, this analysis provides solid support for the discriminant validity of the constructs within our study, affirming that the measures indeed capture distinct concepts as intended.

Table 7: Fornell and Larcker Criterion

Constructs	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**	**15**
BT	0.863														
CA	0.540	0.722													
EF	0.551	0.364	0.851												
GR	0.523	0.568	0.657	0.854											
INV	0.146	0.232	0.293	0.254	0.728										
MID	0.375	0.401	0.475	0.511	0.372	0.717									
MIR	0.483	0.635	0.387	0.537	0.266	0.544	0.746								
MIG	0.457	0.593	0.480	0.506	0.373	0.589	0.577	0.739							
OPG	0.477	0.456	0.546	0.672	0.180	0.380	0.319	0.426	0.841						
PT	0.453	0.307	0.412	0.419	0.231	0.464	0.332	0.422	0.388	0.820					

PRA	-0.003	0.207	0.073	0.112	0.517	0.219	0.250	0.223	0.008	0.079	0.718			
PRF	0.490	0.370	0.587	0.721	0.114	0.366	0.263	0.452	0.711	0.329	0.000	0.878		
RP	0.473	0.375	0.533	0.651	0.347	0.439	0.383	0.428	0.715	0.466	0.176	0.507	0.794	
RT	0.072	0.194	0.178	0.196	0.321	0.459	0.269	0.544	0.153	0.305	0.179	0.161	0.226	0.740
SNT	0.309	0.375	0.433	0.406	0.313	0.426	0.351	0.470	0.291	0.697	0.137	0.345	0.403	0.352	0.807

Note: BT-Business Ties; CA- Competitive Advantage; EF-Efficiency; GR-Growth; INN-Innovativeness; MID-Market Intelligence Dissemination; MIR-Market Intelligence Responsiveness; MIG-Market Intelligence Generation; OPG- Owners' Personal Goals; PT- Political Ties.

Model Fit

This section discusses the evaluation of the study's model fit using statistics derived from Smart PLS statistical software. Acknowledging that model fit statistics are still evolving within this domain, the global fit statistical approach, as introduced by Tenenhaus et al. (2005), supplements this analysis. This approach enhances model fit assessment with specific indices, including the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) and Normed Fit Index (NFI). According to the outcomes presented in Table 8, the SRMR value was 0.097, falling below the recommended threshold of 0.10 (Cangur & Erchan, 2015), which signifies a satisfactory model fit. On the other hand, NFI achieves a measure of 0.695, which is less than the recommended benchmark of 0.900 by (Cangur & Erchan, 2015). Despite this, aggregate evidence from these indices suggests that the model's fit to the data is, to a certain extent, within the acceptable limits outlined by existing scholarly benchmarks.

Table 8: Model fit indices

Model Fit Indices	Acceptable Threshold	Current Study Threshold	Decision: Acceptable/ Unacceptable

SRMR	>0.10	0.097	Acceptable
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	>0.900	0.695	Acceptable

Structural Model

Validating High-Order Constructs

In the structural equation modeling framework, the subsequent phase involves scrutinizing the hypothesized relationships to affirm the proposed hypotheses. This study delineates several higher-order constructs (HOCs) informed by lower-order dimensions (LOCs): Marketing Orientation is articulated through the dimensions of Market Intelligence Dissemination, Market Intelligence Responsiveness, and Market Intelligence Generation; Entrepreneurial Orientation through the dimensions of Innovativeness, Reactiveness, and Risk Taking; Networking via Political Ties, Social Network Ties, and Business Ties; and Marketing Performance through the dimensions of efficiency, growth, owners' personal goals, profit, and reputation.

A comprehensive assessment was conducted to validate the HOCs by examining convergent validity, outer weights, t-values, p-values, outer loadings, and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) metrics. As Table 9 shows, significant outer weights were identified, substantiating the relevance of each lower-order construct within their respective HOC (Hair et al., 2016). Additionally, outer loading values exceeded the 0.50 benchmark across all dimensions (Sarstedt & Cheah, 2019), further confirming the constructs' convergent validity. VIF assessments ensured the absence of collinearity, with all values falling below the critical threshold of five (Hair et al., 2016). The specific findings from Table 9 include the following:

Marketing Orientation, conceptualized through market intelligence dissemination, responsiveness, and generation, shows significant outer weights with values of 0.2903, 0.459, and 0.429, respectively. These weights, coupled with outer loading values of 0.793, 0.865, and 0.866, surpass the benchmark of 0.50, indicating strong convergent validity. The VIF values for these dimensions, ranging from 1.656 to 1.788, remained well below the threshold of five, mitigating concerns of collinearity.

Entrepreneurial Orientation, comprising innovativeness, reactivity, and risk-taking, has outer weights of 0.486, 0.434, and 0.407, respectively. The outer loadings for these dimensions are 0.842, 0.759, and 0.641, respectively, which exceed the critical value of 0.50, thereby confirming the validity of the construct. The VIF values, indicating the absence of collinearity, ranged from 1.115 to 1.474.

Networking, embodied by political, social network, and business ties, exhibits significant outer weights of 0.36004, 0.372, and 0.511, respectively. The corresponding outer loadings were 0.851, 0.781, and 0.789, respectively, confirming convergent validity. With VIF values between 1.259 and 2.216, the analysis underscores a clear distinction among the dimensions, without collinearity concerns.

Marketing Performance, delineated through efficiency, growth, owners' personal goals, profit, and reputation, demonstrates the efficacy of its dimensions with outer weights of 0.2603, 0.251, 0.217, 0.219, and 0.246, respectively. Outer loadings stand impressively at 0.803, 0.886, 0.859, 0.831, and 0.814, signifying valid measures of the construct. VIF values, peaking at 3.086, remain under the critical value of 5, further validating the construct's integrity.

The comprehensive validation, characterized by significant outer weights, substantial outer loadings, and acceptable VIF values across all constructs, firmly establishes higher-order construct validity within our model. This detailed integration of Table 9's values into our analysis not only underscores the empirical robustness of our constructs, but also enhances the theoretical foundation of our structural model, ensuring a nuanced and rigorous validation of the proposed hypotheses.

Table 9: Higher order construct validity

Latent variable	Indicator	Convergent validity	Outer weight	t-Value	p-Value	Outer loadings	VIF
Marketing Orientation	Market Intelligence Dissemination	0.709	0.2903	13.925	0.000	0.793	1.693
	Market Intelligence Responsiveness		0.459	24.917	0.000	0.865	1.656

	Market Intelligence Generation		0.429	23.902	0.000	0.866	1.788
Entrepreneurial Orientation	Innovativeness	0.565	0.486	7.977	0.000	0.842	1.474
	Pro-activeness		0.434	5.500	0.000	0.759	1.366
	Risk Taking		0.407	4.395	0.000	0.641	1.115
Networking	Political Ties	0.652	0.36004	23.936	0.000	0.851	2.216
	Social Network Ties		0.372	18.391	0.000	0.781	1.946
	Business Ties		0.511	15.117	0.000	0.789	1.259
Marketing Performance	Efficiency	0.704	0.2603	15.813	0.000	0.803	1.903
	Growth		0.251	20.448	0.000	0.886	2.994
	Owners Personal Goals		0.217	20.638	0.000	0.859	3.087
	Profit		0.219	21.504	0.000	0.831	2.765
	Reputation		0.246	16.256	0.000	0.814	2.425

Hypothesis Testing

In this study, the hypotheses were examined using 5000 bootstrapping subsamples with a one-tailed test, setting the significance threshold at 5%. To assess the influence of marketing orientation, entrepreneurial orientation, competitive advantage, and networking on marketing performance, a pseudo-latent construct approach was employed. This technique enables reflective indicators to serve as dimensions, facilitating a nuanced analysis of the construct relationships (Temme et al., 2014).

Table 10 presents the results of the rigorous testing procedure. Specifically, Hypothesis 1 (H1), probing the link between Entrepreneurial Orientation and competitive advantage, did not achieve statistical significance (β = -0.075, t-value = 1.204, p-value

> 0.01), indicating no substantial relationship. Conversely, Hypothesis 2 (H2), which explores the relationship between Marketing Orientation and Competitive Advantage, was validated ($\beta = 0.701$, t-value = 16.362, p-value < 0.05), highlighting a strong and significant association. Similarly, Hypothesis 3 (H3), concerning the impact of Competitive Advantage on Networking and Hypothesis 4 (H4), concerning the effect of Networking on Marketing Performance, were both substantiated ($\beta = 0.526$, t-value = 13.095, p-value < 0.05; and $\beta = 0.650$, t-value = 18.279, p-value < 0.05, respectively), underscoring significant positive relationships. These results indicate that, except for H1, all the direct hypotheses (H2, H3, and H4) garnered empirical support, indicating their relevance to the framework of the study. Consequently, while H1 was not supported, Hypotheses H2, H3, and H4 were affirmed, as depicted in Figure 4. This delineation affirms the pivotal roles of Marketing Orientation, Competitive Advantage, and Networking in enhancing Marketing Performance, except for the expected contribution of Entrepreneurial Orientation to competitive advantage, which requires further exploration.

Table 10: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Std Beta	t-value	p-Value	Decision
H1	Entrepreneurial Orientation -> Competitive Advantage	-0.075	1.204	0.229	Not Supported
H2	Marketing Orientation -> Competitive Advantage	0.701	16.362	0.000	Supported
H3	Competitive Advantage -> Networking	0.526	13.095	0.000	Supported
H4	Networking -> Marketing Performance	0.650	18.279	0.000	Supported

Figure 3: PLS Higher Order Construct

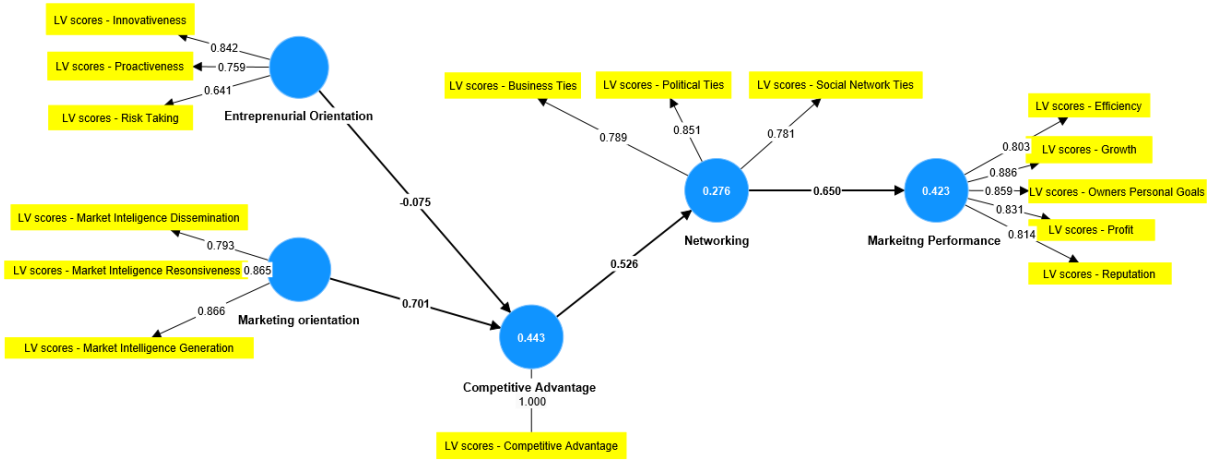
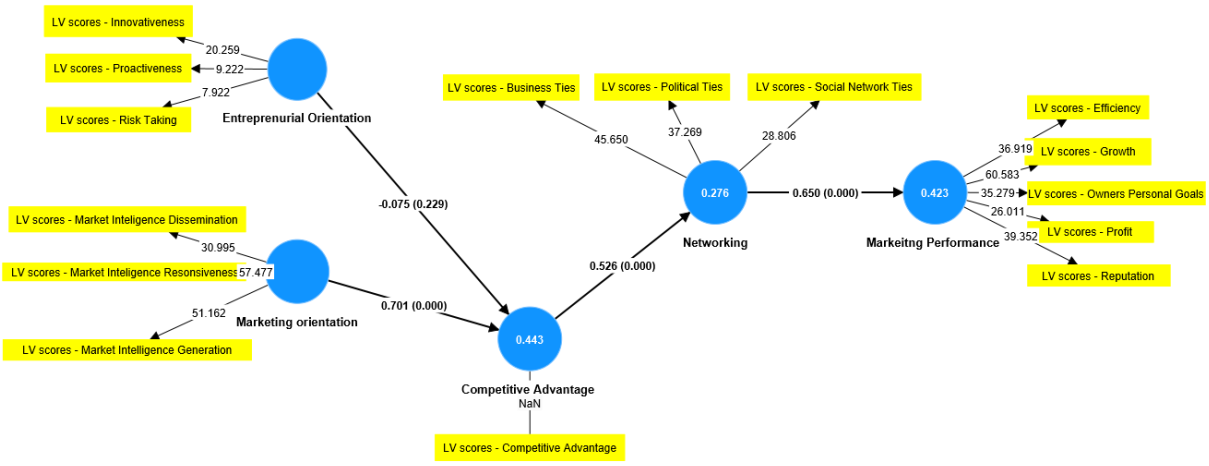


Figure 4: Bootstrap Higher Order Construct



Mediation Effect

This study investigated the mediating roles of Competitive Advantage and Networking in the relationship between Entrepreneurial Orientation and marketing performance, as well as between Marketing Orientation and Marketing Performance. Utilizing the bootstrapping technique detailed in Table 11, we examined the proposed mediation effects. This approach facilitated an in-depth analysis of the indirect relationships central to our research hypotheses, as shown in Table 11 and Figure 4.

Hypothesis H5: This hypothesis posits the absence of a serial mediation effect between Entrepreneurial Orientation and Marketing Performance. This analysis, reflecting an indirect effect with a t-value of 1.169 (p=0.242), supports H5, indicating that the mediating roles of Competitive Advantage and Networking do not significantly influence this relationship.

Hypothesis H6: In contrast, H6 hypothesizes a significant serial mediation effect between Marketing Orientation and Marketing Performance. The results corroborate this hypothesis, revealing a significant indirect effect, with a t-value of 6.599 ($p < 0.05$). This finding substantiates the serial mediating role of Competitive Advantage and Networking in strengthening the impact of Marketing Orientation on Marketing Performance.

While the serial mediation hypothesis regarding the linkage between Entrepreneurial Orientation and Marketing Performance was not supported (H5), the analysis confirms the presence of a significant mediation effect between Marketing Orientation and Marketing Performance (H6). These outcomes provide valuable insights into the complex dynamics underlying the relationships between these key constructs within our study framework.

Table 11: Mediation Analysis

				Confidence Interval				
Hypothesis	**Relationship**	**Mean**	**Stdev**	**2.5%**	**97.5%**	**t-value**	**p-value**	**Decision**
H5	EO -> CA -> NW -> MP	-0.026	0.022	-0.070	0.017	1.169	0.242	Not supported
H6	MO -> CA -> NW -> MP	0.240	0.036	0.174	0.316	6.599	0.000	Supported

Moderation Effect

This analysis explores the moderating effects of demographic variables such as Education, Marital Status, Experience, and Age on the relationships between key constructs: Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO), Market Orientation (MO), Competitive Advantage (CA), networking (NW), and Marketing Performance (MP) among female entrepreneurs in the Dakshina Kannada District. The visual representation and statistical outputs provide a comprehensive understanding of these interactions, as highlighted in the plots shown in figure 5 and the corresponding statistical table 12.

Under hypothesis (H7a), education: The moderation effect of education on the relationship between EO and CA is statistically significant ($p = 0.07$). This suggests that higher educational levels enhance's the influence on CA. Women entrepreneurs with a better education leverage their entrepreneurial skills more effectively to gain a competitive edge. The lines representing different levels of education show varying slopes, indicating a moderating impact of EO's effectiveness in enhancing CA. Marital Status: Marital status significantly moderates the relationship between EO and CA ($p < 0.001$), indicating that marital status plays a crucial role in how entrepreneurial orientation contributes to gaining a competitive advantage. The steep slope for the high marital status category indicates a stronger effect of EO on CA among married female entrepreneurs. Experience: The moderating effect of Experience on the EO and CA relationship is not supported ($p = 0.378$), indicating that experience does not significantly alter the influence of EO on CA. The lines were relatively parallel and showed minimal variance across the different experience levels. Age: Age did not significantly moderate the relationship between EO and CA ($p = 0.291$), suggesting that the impact of EO on CA was consistent across different age groups. The near-parallel lines across age groups confirmed a negligible moderation effect.

Under (H7b) Education: The moderating effect of Education on MO and CA is not supported ($p = 0.204$), indicating that education level does not significantly change how MO impacts CA. The lines for the different education levels are close together, indicating little to no moderation. Marital Status: Marital status strongly moderates the relationship between MO and CA ($p < 0.001$), showing that marital status significantly influences how market orientation translates into a competitive advantage. These divergent lines suggest a pronounced moderating effect of marital status. Experience: Experience does not significantly moderate the MO and CA relationships ($p = 0.859$), indicating a uniform influence of MO on CA, regardless of experience level. The near-constant slopes across experience levels suggest minimal moderation. Age: Age significantly moderates the relationship between MO and CA ($p = 0.001$), highlighting that younger and older entrepreneurs experience different effects of MO on CA. The varying slopes for the different age groups show that age affects the influence of MO on CA.

Under (H7c) Education, the moderation effect of Education: The CA and NW is significant (p = 0.013), suggesting that education enhances the effectiveness of CA in fostering networking. The slopes diverge across education levels, indicating a moderating role of education. Marital Status: Marital status does not significantly moderate CA and NW relationships (p = 0.677), implying that the effectiveness of CA in promoting networking is consistent across marital status. The near-parallel lines confirmed the lack of significant moderation by marital status. Experience: Experience significantly moderates CA and NW relationships (p < 0.001), indicating that experienced entrepreneurs leverage their competitive advantage more effectively in networking. The distinct slopes for the different experience levels showed a significant moderation effect. Age: Age did not significantly moderate the relationship between CA and NW (p = 0.164), suggesting a consistent impact of CA on NW across the different age groups. Similar slopes across age groups indicate negligible moderation by age.

Under (H7d) Education, the moderation effect of Education: The NW and MP is not supported (p = 0.398), suggesting that the effectiveness of networking in enhancing marketing performance is consistent regardless of educational attainment. The lines for the different education levels are close together, indicating little to no moderation. Marital Status: Marital status significantly moderated the relationship between NW and MP (p < 0.001), indicating that marital status influences how networking impacts marketing performance. The varying slopes across marital status highlight a significant moderation. Experience: Experience did not significantly moderate the relationship between NW and MP (p = 0.215), suggesting a uniform influence of networking on marketing performance across different experience levels. The near-parallel lines across experience levels indicate minimal moderation. Age: Age did not significantly moderate the relationship between NW and MP (p = 0.535), indicating a consistent impact of networking on marketing performance across age groups. The similar slopes for the different age groups confirm the lack of significant moderation by age.

Table 12: Moderation Effect

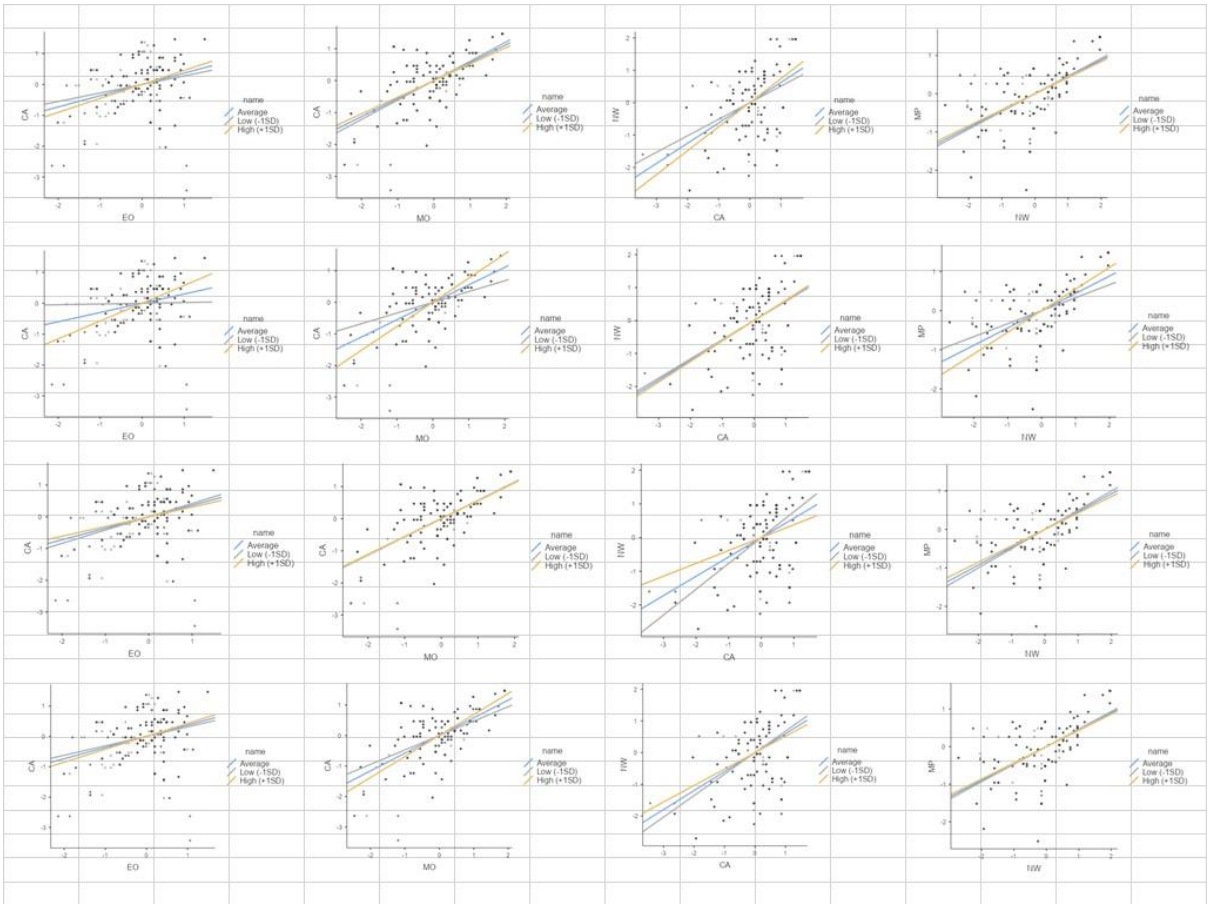
	Estimate	SE	Z	p	Decision
	EO&CA*EDU				
EO	0.3645	0.0551	6.611	< .001	

Education	-0.0237	0.0362	-0.654	0.513	Supported
EO ✻ Education	0.0847	0.0468	1.811	0.07	
	MO&CA*EDU				
MO	0.5635	0.0344	16.3734	< .001	
Education	3.65E-04	0.0298	0.0122	0.99	
MO ✻ Education	-0.0419	0.033	-1.2714	0.204	Not Supported
	CA&NW*EDU				
CA	0.626	0.0548	11.44	< .001	
Education	-0.132	0.042	-3.15	0.002	Supported
CA ✻ Education	0.111	0.0446	2.49	0.013	
	NW&MP*EDU				
NW	0.441	0.028	15.757	< .001	
Education	-0.0472	0.0278	-1.702	0.089	Not Supported
NW ✻ Education	-0.0208	0.0247	-0.845	0.398	
	EO&CA*MS				
EO	0.3	0.0544	5.51	< .001	
Martial	-0.191	0.0627	-3.05	0.002	Supported
EO ✻ Martial	0.475	0.0825	5.76	< .001	
	MO&CA*MS				
MO	0.552	0.0327	16.89	< .001	
Martial	-0.21	0.0505	-4.15	< .001	Supported
MO ✻ Martial	0.365	0.0562	6.49	< .001	
	CA&NW*MS				
CA	0.6029	0.0557	10.826	< .001	
Martial	0.0485	0.0768	0.631	0.528	Not Supported
CA ✻ Martial	0.0343	0.0824	0.417	0.677	
	NW&MP*MS				
NW	0.4426	0.0273	16.19	< .001	
Martial	0.0994	0.0488	2.04	0.042	Supported
NW ✻ Martial	0.1904	0.0478	3.98	< .001	
	EO&CA*EXP				
EO	0.3628	0.0554	6.547	< .001	
EX	0.0232	0.0333	0.698	0.485	Not Supported
EO ✻ EX	-0.0494	0.056	-0.881	0.378	
	MO&CA*EXP				
MO	0.56171	0.0351	16.016	< .001	
EX	0.0179	0.0274	0.654	0.513	Not Supported
MO ✻ EX	-0.00574	0.0323	-0.178	0.859	
	CA&NW*EXP				

CA	0.574	0.0513	11.19	< .001	
EX	-0.262	0.0362	-7.24	< .001	Supported
CA ✻ EX	-0.169	0.044	-3.84	< .001	
	NW&MP*EXP				
NW	0.4631	0.0277	16.72	< .001	
EX	0.0619	0.0252	2.45	0.014	Not Supported
NW ✻ EX	-0.0319	0.0257	-1.24	0.215	
	EO&CA*AGE				
EO	0.36839	0.0555	6.635	< .001	
Age	0.00583	0.0202	0.288	0.773	Not Supported
EO ✻ Age	0.03024	0.0287	1.055	0.291	
	MO&CA*AGE				
MO	0.5805	0.0341	17.02	< .001	
Age	-0.0299	0.0164	-1.82	0.069	Supported
MO ✻ Age	0.0574	0.0179	3.2	0.001	
	CA&NW*AGE				
CA	0.5999	0.0548	10.95	< .001	
Age	-0.0248	0.0238	-1.04	0.298	Not Supported
CA ✻ Age	-0.0424	0.0305	-1.39	0.164	
	NW&MP*AGE				
NW	0.44924	0.0274	16.381	< .001	
Age	0.0611	0.0152	4.009	< .001	Not Supported
NW ✻ Age	-0.00977	0.0158	-0.62	0.535	

Note: EO - Entrepreneurial orientation, MO: market orientation, CA: competitive advantage, NW: networking, MP: marketing performance, AGE: age, MS: marital status, EXP: experience, EDU: education.

Figure 5: Simple Slope – Moderation Analysis



Discussion

The study titled "Marketing Practices of Women Entrepreneurs: A Study of Micro and Small Enterprises in Dakshina Kannada District" explores the intricate relationships between various strategic orientations and their impact on marketing performance. It also considers how demographic variables, such as education, marital status, experience, and age, moderate these relationships.

Key Findings and Hypotheses Testing

The first hypothesis (H1) posits that EO positively impacts CA among women entrepreneurs in micro and small enterprises. Contrary to expectations, this relationship was not supported by the data ($\beta = -0.075$, $p = 0.229$). This suggests that, while entrepreneurial behaviors such as innovation and risk-taking are critical, they may not directly translate into a competitive advantage without additional mediating factors such as effective networking or strong market orientation. This aligns with the insights of Hult et al. (2005), who suggest that EO effectiveness may require the presence of other strategic elements to be fully realized.

Hypothesis 2, which explored the influence of MO on CA, is strongly supported ($\beta = 0.701$, $p < 0.001$). This finding highlights the importance of aligning business operations with the market and customer preferences. For women entrepreneurs, adopting a market-oriented approach appears crucial for establishing and sustaining competitive advantage, echoing the findings of Narver and Slater (1990). The third hypothesis posited that CA positively influences NW ($\beta = 0.526$, $p < 0.001$). This relationship underscores how achieving a competitive edge can facilitate the formation of beneficial networks and provide entrepreneurs with access to resources, information, and market opportunities. This is consistent with Gulati et al. (2000), who emphasized the role of strategic alliances in enhancing competitive positioning. Hypothesis 4 proposes that NW positively impacts MP and is validated ($\beta = 0.650$, $p < 0.001$). Effective networking is crucial for improving marketing outcomes, particularly in micro and small enterprises led by women. Networking helps entrepreneurs gain market insights, share best practices, and collaborate on marketing efforts, thereby enhancing their overall performance (Stam & Elfring, 2008).

In Hypothesis 5, mediation analysis revealed that the indirect effect of EO on MP through CA and NW was not significant ($t = 1.169$, $p = 0.242$). This indicates that, while EO is important, its impact on marketing performance may not be fully realized unless complemented by other factors such as CA and NW. Under Hypothesis 6, the mediation effect of MO on MP through CA and NW was significant ($t = 6.599$, $p < 0.001$). This finding suggests that MO enhances MP both directly and indirectly by improving CA and facilitating effective networking. This reinforces the pivotal role of a market-driven approach in boosting marketing performance, particularly in women-led enterprises.

Education was found to significantly moderate the relationship between EO and CA (H7a) and between CA and NW (H7c), indicating that higher educational levels amplify the positive effects of EO on CA and CA on NW. Educated entrepreneurs are better equipped to leverage their entrepreneurial skills and competitive advantages in building networks (Sharma, 2013). However, education did not significantly moderate the relationships between MO and CA (H7b) or NW and MP (H7d), suggesting that the benefits of market orientation and networking on competitive advantage and marketing performance are consistent, regardless of educational attainment. Marital status significantly moderated the effects of EO on CA and MO (H7a and H7b), showing that married entrepreneurs may leverage their stability and support systems more effectively to enhance their competitive positioning. Additionally, marital status moderated the impact of NW on MP (H7d), indicating that personal stability contributes to how entrepreneurs use their networks for marketing success.

Experience and age did not show significant moderating effects on the relationships between EO/MO and CA or CA and NW, suggesting a consistent influence of entrepreneurial and market orientations across different levels of experience and age. However, experience moderated the relationship between CA and NW and age moderated the relationship between MO and CA, highlighting the nuanced ways in which these demographic factors interact with strategic orientations to influence outcomes.

Theoretical Implications

This study leverages the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Dynamic Capabilities Theory to provide a nuanced understanding of the strategic practices of women entrepreneurs in micro and small enterprises within the Dakshina Kannada District. The theoretical implications of this study are multi-faceted. The findings extend the RBV by illustrating how women entrepreneurs utilize their internal resources and capabilities to achieve competitive advantage. Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) and Market Orientation (MO) are crucial internal capabilities that, when combined with effective networking, significantly enhance competitive positioning and marketing performance. This study reinforces the notion that EO and MO are not just isolated strategic orientations but are integral resources that contribute to sustaining a competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). This research supports the application of the Dynamic

Capabilities Theory to explain how women entrepreneurs adapt and reconfigure their resources to respond to changing market conditions. The integration of EO and MO with Competitive Advantage (CA) and Networking (NW) demonstrates how these dynamic capabilities enable firms to navigate the complex and evolving business environment, particularly in the context of micro and small enterprises (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997).

By investigating the combined effects of EO and MO on CA and subsequently on NW and MP, this study provides empirical evidence for the synergistic impact of multiple strategic orientations. This finding highlights that the interplay between these orientations is critical for driving competitive advantage and marketing performance, aligning with the perspectives of integrated strategic frameworks (Narver & Slater, 1990; Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). This study further enriches the theoretical discourse by exploring how demographic factors such as education, marital status, experience, and age moderate the relationships between strategic orientations and performance outcomes. This adds depth to the understanding of how personal and contextual factors influence the effectiveness of strategic practices in entrepreneurship (Sharma, 2013).

Strategic and Policy Implications

The findings of this study on the marketing practices of women entrepreneurs in micro and small enterprises (MSEs) in Dakshina Kannada District offer several strategic and policy implications. These implications are designed to enhance the support provided to women entrepreneurs and to improve their marketing effectiveness.

1. **Integrative Strategies**:

   Women entrepreneurs should adopt integrative strategies that combine Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) and Market Orientation (MO) to enhance their competitive advantage. This approach merges innovative practices with a deeper understanding of the market needs to provide a robust foundation for business growth.

2. **Networking as a Catalyst**:

Networking remains a vital tool for enhancing marketing performance. Women entrepreneurs should be encouraged and supported to build and leverage professional networks to gain market insight and foster collaborative opportunities. Government and non-governmental organizations can facilitate networking events, workshops, and platforms to connect women entrepreneurs with industry experts, potential partners, and mentors.

3. **Educational Support**:

   Providing educational resources and training can enhance women's entrepreneurial capabilities, enabling them to effectively translate EO into competitive advantages and build strategic networks. Training programmes should focus on modern marketing techniques, digital literacy, financial management, and leadership skills.

4. **Marital and Personal Support**:

   Policies that recognize the role of personal and marital support in entrepreneurship could be beneficial. Programs aimed at balancing work and personal life could help married women leverage their support systems more effectively in business contexts. Flexible work arrangements, childcare support, and family counseling services can be part of these initiatives.

5. **Tailored Strategies for Experience and Age**:

   Customized strategies that consider the unique needs and capabilities of entrepreneurs based on their experience and age can help optimize the impact of EO and MO on their businesses. For example, younger entrepreneurs might benefit more from digital marketing training, whereas older entrepreneurs could benefit from networking and mentorship programs.

6. **Social Media Marketing**:

   Social media platforms are powerful tools for marketing and can help women entrepreneurs reach wider audiences at lower costs. Training in effective social media marketing strategies, including content creation, engagement techniques,

and analytics, should be provided. Encouraging the use of platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn can help female entrepreneurs build their brands and connect with customers.

7. **Community Organization and Awareness**:

   Community organizations can play a significant role in raising awareness of the importance of women's entrepreneurship and providing support mechanisms. Initiatives that focus on community building and creating local support groups can empower female entrepreneurs and provide them with the resources they need to succeed.

8. **Access to Funding and Marketing Resources**:

   Ensuring that female entrepreneurs have access to financial resources is critical. The government should continue to promote and expand funding schemes, grants, and low-interest loans specifically targeting women entrepreneurs. Additionally, creating awareness about these financial opportunities and simplifying the application process can help women benefit from these programs.

9. **E-Marketplace Awareness:**

   Awareness about resource procurement portal named The Central Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs). CPSUs were required to participate in the Public Procurement Portal GeM-Government E-Marketplace, a program introduced by the Indian government in the year 2018. CPSUs should register their merchants on the GeM portal. Out of the 25% required procurement, CPSUs will mandate the purchase of goods from women entrepreneurs in the amount of 3%. The current requirement of 3% for buying from female entrepreneurs ought to be increased.

10. **Mentorship and Guidance**:

    Experienced mentors can provide invaluable guidance to women entrepreneurs, helping them navigate challenges and make informed decisions. Establishing

mentorship programs that connect women entrepreneurs with successful business leaders can provide the support and inspiration required for growth.

11. **Monitoring and Evaluation**:

    Regular monitoring and evaluation of implemented strategies and policies are essential to measure their effectiveness and make necessary adjustments. Data collection and analysis should focus on key performance indicators such as business growth, market reach, and financial performance.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Despite the insightful contributions of this study, several limitations need to be acknowledged, which also pave the way for future research that is geographically confined to Dakshina Kannada District, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions or countries. Future research should explore similar dynamics in different geographic and cultural contexts to validate and extend the applicability of these results. The cross-sectional nature of this study restricts the ability to infer causal relationships between variables. Longitudinal studies are recommended to track changes over time and better understand the causal pathways linking EO, MO, CA, NW, and MP. While focusing on female entrepreneurs provides valuable insights into their unique challenges and strategies, it may also limit the generalizability of the findings to all entrepreneurs. Future research could compare the strategic orientations and performance of women-led enterprises with those of men-led enterprises to identify gender-specific dynamics. This study examines EO and MO as key strategic orientations. Future research could explore additional orientations, such as technology or social orientation, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors driving competitive advantage and marketing performance. This study considers networking a general construct. Future research could delve deeper into the different dimensions of networking, such as formal versus informal networks or strong versus weak ties, to uncover more nuanced insights into how various types of networks contribute to business success. While this study examines CA and NW as mediators and demographic factors as moderators, future research could investigate other potential mediators and moderators, such as organizational culture, leadership style, or

market dynamism, to enrich the understanding of the relationships between strategic orientations and performance outcomes.

Conclusion

This study advances the theoretical understanding of how women entrepreneurs in micro and small enterprises in Dakshina Kannada District employ strategic orientations to enhance their competitive advantage and marketing performance. Integrating the Resource-Based View and Dynamic Capabilities Theory offers a robust framework for analyzing the synergistic effects of EO and MO and the critical roles of CA and NW. This study underscores the importance of considering demographic factors in strategic planning and provides a foundation for future research exploring the complex dynamics of entrepreneurship in diverse contexts. As women entrepreneurs continue to play a pivotal role in economic development, these insights are crucial in shaping policies and practices that support their growth and success.

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